figures/ debated, carried, in their eyes was the equivalent of finding work for the workless. One of them, after presiding over a committee of the Indian Round-table Conference, remarked that things had gone well, since he had managed to avoid all controversial subjects. Henderson, looking round the Disarmament Conference, drew attention to a bewhiskered Polish delegate who, he said, was bound to give trouble because he had a look of the boiler-makers' union about him.

ii

The Prime Minister's first public announcement on taking office had been: 'We intend to do some thinking.' Later he had sternly added: 'There must be no monkeying/ In the event, as might have been anticipated, there was little thinking and much monkeying. It was generally understood that the thinking he and his colleagues proposed to undertake was to be directed towards solving the unemployment problem. This problem had come to dominate politics. It made and unmade governments. Each month statistics were published which, when they showed an increase, gave pleasure to the Opposition and pain to the Government, and were as eagerly awaited by politicians as stock-exchange prices by speculators.

It was only towards the end of the last century that unemployment began to crop up in political controversy, and even then it was assumed to be as inevitable as poverty. Keir Hardie's only proposal for the unemployed was to feed them.[8] He did not envisage the possibility of putting them to work. After the War and up to the formation of the National Government in 1931,

more parliamentary time was taken up with unemployment than with any other subject. Labour members, when they were in opposition, were relentless in cross-examining the Government about their efforts to deal with the problem, and insistent that they knew what should be done and were prepared to do it. In the constituencies, on how many platforms at how many

[8] See *Pilgrim to the Left* by S. G. Hobson.